



It Then

by Danielle Collobert
translated by Norma Cole

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Translator's Note

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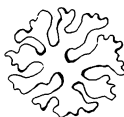
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Danielle Collobert was born in Rostrenen, Côtes-du-Nord, France in 1940. In the mid-fifties, she came to Paris, began writing, and travelling: Tunis, 1960. Her first book, *Chant de guerres* (*Song of Wars*), poems, was published in 1961 but is no longer available, since Collobert hunted down all the copies she could locate and destroyed them. She became involved with the FLN (Front de Libération nationale), and during over a year of sustained political activity did not write; but towards the end of the Algerian war, Collobert worked on a publication, *Révolution africaine*. In 1964, *Meurtre* (*Murder*), championed by Raymond Queneau, was published by Gallimard: it evidences Collobert's preoccupation with the "biological malaise of living, which is to say, of thinking." In 1970, she undertook her first major voyage, stopping in Indonesia, Bali, Borneo. *Bataille* (*Battle*), Collobert's first radio piece, was broadcast in Germany in 1971; in 1972, Jean Pierre Faye, director of the Change Collection, Seghers/Laffont, published *Dire I-II* (*Say I-II*), paired works indicating movement towards the sparser pared-down text. Another radio piece, *Polyphone* (*Polyphonic*) was broadcast in France in 1973; and then she was travelling again: Italy, South America, Mexico, USA, Greece. . . . In 1976, Collobert collaborated on a radio piece, *Discours* (*Discourse*), which was aired in Germany, then more travelling. Also in 1976, *Il donc* was published, again by Change. Continually on the move, as if to prove, as her longtime friend, Uccio Esposito-Torrigiani has written, that there was no "elsewhere," no way out, or just one way out, Collobert returned to France with a short text, *Survie* (*Survival*), which was published by Orange Export Ltd (eds. Emmanuel Hocquard and Raquel). In Paris, after twenty years of writing, as she noted in her journal, Collobert ended her life in her hotel room on the eve of her birthday, 24 July, 1978.

... her simply seeking the anonymity of transience: to flee from the increasingly urgent desire or temptation to make extremes coincide.

Anne-Marie Albiach

“Je ne peux plus dire mon nom”

Danielle Collobert

It Then

It then — It — abandon of the impersonal — of the infinitive — at last resigned — to embody — with flesh in pain — to embody like the thumbnail — It then

I

It — flows — it bangs itself — slammed into walls — it
picks itself up — stamps feet — it doesn't go far — four
steps to the left — new wall — it extends its arms — leans
— leans hard — rubs its head — again — harder — fore-
head — there — the forehead — hurts — rubs harder —
becomes inflamed — not the forehead — from within —
cries

good start for the pain — head between arms — forehead
against wall — and rubbing — skin breaks open a little —
not enough — ooh the pain — there it is — feet kicking the
wall down low — go on — with the toes — striking hard —
thrashing — nothing to be done — doesn't subside — never
will subside — the rage — the pain — cries — hits with flat
hands — dull noise — a cry — here a cry — no gasp — a
little above a gasp — in shrillness — here it comes —
collects at the back of the throat — what's going to come out
— still below the pain — not enough

sobs shaken — saliva at lips' edge — bitter taste — slides a little towards the corner — nose smashing — lips — the lips twisted sideways — pulled back to the gums — moistening the wall — eyes closed — stomach and chest flattened — unsticks — comes back harder — sharp impact of shoulders — unsticks — comes back again with elbows with knees — bangs fists — fists' backs — to the bone — starts over — skin reddens — rips at last — it falls — doubled up — dragging arms stretched along the wall — kept vertical by ends of fingernails — it collapses — impact of back — head rings on wooden floor — it pushes up onto its elbow — drags along the wall — reaches hung-up coat — hangs onto — hoists itself — buries its head in the wool — grabs the arms — holds the end of the sleeves tight — overlaps them around neck — expecting softness — but no — squeezes hard — chokes — coughs into tears — chokes — lets go — hangs onto cloth — pulls hard to rip — rips with all its strength — tears out pieces with its teeth — spits — chokes — arms fall back down — sinks down — slips onto the ground

a body there — practicing pain — as if it hadn't had enough
of this suffering — at each moment — in floods — in vast
wave — trying pathetically to practice it

body striking — disfiguring its limbs with the too full pain
— which body sudden empty — which violence against —
about empty — pain congealed at last — wanting to reach
it to set it once and for all — to keep it there motionless —
or set it down in front of it — itself — to make it really
visible — in its infinitely numerous images — unceasingly

a body there — no — that body there — the one banging
its face against the wall — maybe — no

walls fictive also — unnecessary walls — no — only to see
from the place of the present invisible — here — facing the
stripped body — arms motionless yet sweeping around in
space without meeting anything to lean on — temporary
connection — just for an instant — to slow the breathing
down — slow down the beating — to quiet down — this
body seeking the place — the hollow in which to melt back
down again — heat ruptured — and cold of the world
around — its place or position unsure to inscribe against
the lack — the shocks of the day

it stretches out on the ground — gathers itself up — arms
and legs folded — prenatal and burial position — identity
— like this — rarely — when exhausted or crying — daily
agony in mute groans — without doubt — since nothing
there is listening — nothing blends with its voice — isolation of silence

it is going to unfold — it unfolds — climbs back up towards
which surface — touches its body — listens to its breathing
— directs it — tries to breathe without tiring — rhythm to
maintain for the remaining waking — forgets that noise of
air inside — opens eyes — again becomes motionless

around — places — choice of place — labyrinth — tunnel —
chamber — underground — homes — midway — towards
the white — the dark

or outside — to see — possible for the eye — cities — rivers
— the oceans — nothing but dead ends

nearby — more or less — faces — bodies — movements —
taut — slick with use — to death

body upon body — to body
lost
and cries

nearby then — voices

choice of voices — present — past — dreamed — a voice
coming from lips — unstuck — barely — from above the
hip — it lifts its head — looks at body level — skin stretched
on bone below the face — shudder under the breath —
breath little by little articulated — a word — for it — a
word — for the skin — there — maybe

a first word — choice
phrase for a first word
sequence — as always
necessity the sweetness of saying — to know
words for the story

its voice lowers — withdraws into the folds — its lips partly
open — word — silence — no — sounds of the body —
commotion — tries to hear — holds its breath — hears —
in the distance — deep — dim

story begun there — the inarticulate — the muffled com-
motion — voice begun there — ends there — at body level

this restricted space — the reduced limits — scrapings of
surfaces by erosion — the aging

ceaseless ripping of creases — brings to light words —
rehearse choice — according to the lips and body

worn out words — body long worn out — at the same time
— same rhythm

it hears itself — in the end — last word — last breath —
its raised body — tries again to say — stretches beyond
measure — crazy extension — in the end — maybe not —
the word choked maybe — in a groan — or the breath lost
— long lost — for the ear — motionless suffering — without
cry

for the moment — if desired — plays — moves onstage —
the body — speaking — words harmonically — make paths
— by flow — across seams of words — horizontal deposit
— at the bottom of which

sometimes slips out — separates itself — solidified — a
word — walled up inside — doesn't slip out — it cries out
— yells — always the same word — twists — chokes without
expulsion — neither spit — nor vomit — slow burning —
fulminating

its flooded body
dull corrosion — imprecise
humiliated body — beaten ceaselessly by the words — reef
eaten by the water — eaten away on all sides — shaken up
by shocks to the heart — released to the pain without end
— is going to die — goes to pieces — despairing

doesn't believe in it — never — is never dying — will never
know its end — as long as it lasts — there — on its body —
no duration

chafing of the skin — still — muted in the cavities — louder
in the convexes — shaving the skin — sound arrives along
the whole extent — arrives at its lips — ever ready to fall
open — its body open to the words — greedy — suffering
— from tension — of waiting

open right to the end — starving — to hear still — as much
as it hears — the voices in the setting — their words — the
world there — so near — bodies close — to know in order
to bear — still gasping to say — to hear — not silence — no
— not silence — words still — words against its lifeless
body some place — wordless body

thus its ground — at the heart of misery the words — dust
— taken from the body — at body level — choice — then
— among all the identified bodies — it rests its hand — its
breath in a hollow — head tilted back — detaching its lips
from the skin — rests its lips on the body — word between
two motions — to remember the word — no — seeks an-
other now — for this interval of time — what it says —
could say — still perhaps to be said — if naked still body on
body — it would say

it picks up again beginning with the word — there — finds
another gesture — seeks agreement — links itself from
gestures to words — seeking — still — it holds out its hand
— at the edge of the face — tangles its fingers in its hair —
pulls back — or rather it's its face — in the first gesture —
once again then the head tilted back — to find out where
starts where ends the linking

of speaking knows nothing — shut up inside the word —
bewildered pursuit — to fill in space and time — time dead
space dead — whence the cold and pain — second — minute
— length of the gesture — distance to face — to hands —
to erase — to erase — to dissolve there — could perhaps —
in the modes of the possible — imaginary incursions — still

liaisons possible for bodies

some expectations

exchanges

to put on edge

can touch — grasp — shape — with light touch — deep —

at surface and to penetrate — stiffness or suppleness of

flesh — some equivalents — the ridiculous

mooring of old sensations — by slow repetition — waste

products

from so far seeming — cloudy determinations — the images
— forms of words unrolling slow under the detached sliced
bodies — out of reach — if not

the margin
in the margin — the voices hear each other

hears itself and collects the shreds — gyres around itself —
if it remembers from where — extends — geographical —
on its passage — trace — impression someplace

minimal contacts of tinted flesh — resonating on the circuit
— long walk groping blindly — from words to music —
chance — veritable embrace

thick colors'
heavy swells — the visible

eyes on edge — circle upon circle of dilated pupil — picking
up the outlines — lines — map of the body — suffering
shocks to the ear

it looks — burned — if eyelids could reduce intensity —
light memory — of having seen

exploding of the eye — felt immensity of a blow — flooding
the aqueous surface — will spill over from the body flaming
— one day — without doubt

at the level of the flesh to look for darkness — it glues its
eyes on the dark cavities — lashes stilled — flattened against
the damp skin — seeks its night

thick shadows'
heavy swells — bleeding

it doesn't see any more — tries not to see any more — digs
in — shivers — as if forever nascent — all along the tinted
beaches — at the meat market — flowing waves of red —
fiction — in the homogenous liquid

nor swim — naked in the density nor float
slow fall — without order
without distinction

or the dark — hazy — dark blue green grey — fixed point
between the closed eyes — hardly twinkling — passing
lighthouse lighting — finally perceived black — eyes' absolute
silence

in the plumbed flesh — black — red on black —
on red ground
on black ground
deep sleep — living's limit
duration's threshold in the dark — threshold of a shape
dissolved

even now — perhaps
forever lost that one
for other shapes to come — dissolution
possible words to dissolve
it collects the syllables — squeezes eyelids — speechless on
the other body — filled with strained sounds — dislocated
— silence without silence — already said — noise of crushed
speech — mechanical — grinding — consistency sometimes
irreducible — resistance — perhaps — resists with meaning
— or unexpected music — stubborn

it scatters the sounds — harmony — dissonance — awaken-
ing

at the unappeased body — is biting — slowness of the
motion — of the righted body — fullness of breath —
presses elbows underneath — head tilted back — already
seen like this — curve of the small of the back — breathing
to the belly will arrive the flow — or at the open mouth the
word — or spaced the memory — some shreds of articula-
tion

underlying the gestures — to glances the flow — can only
wait for that — gushing — on groundwork — nerve and
vessel work — slowness of current — surges — detours —
frailness — uncertainty

there — choice

to choose the flow of the body — speech — choice of desire's
hesitation — of the desirable — to want — circuit of desire

it wants — it buries itself in the confusion — it wants — it
wanted — would want — will yet want — it was inclined —
was pushing away — was seeking — the whole in the present
or time's future — shape to desire — its long work of pro-
duction

interruption in sleep — inertia — short moments of peace
when it will doubtless be stretched out on its side — arm
bent under head — clear vision of a semblance of absence
in the world

agreement of body with inertia
agreement with emptiness
weightlessness of time
rest on the ground

recovered earth — it crumbles — it melts — words penetrating the ground — it dissolves — loss of possessions — loss of power — like dead the buried text

voice silence underground

quiet depths

to break up

yet to rise up out of the ground — folds and fractures —
ruptures of thicknesses — overabundance of seams — in
trouble being in daylight — to go out into the visible — into
hearing — body continually withdrawing — desire out in
front of speech — to reach a word — slow crossing

either projected — expelled

or vomited plially — to say the awakening

mouth open at last — despairing — rush — pain

return of irritation to the nerves — torturing the fibres —
gaze tirelessly separated — its body falls open — discretion
expectation of the blow — opening one by one orifices —
pores surface — the least defenses — it's taking it badly —
fear that increases — heavy easing — complete submission
to the bites of the word

it is reappearing — floating up from the ground — unfolded
— opened out — its length on the ground lifted up to the
vertical — span of outstretched arms — to offer ceaselessly
all of its body — stretching out to fullest extension — to
absorb — to fill up

vibrating easing — elongation — arms outstretched towards
the other body — without end — other fear still nascent —
to comfort the skin — time of the tension

in the tension — it withdraws — folds in — hardens its skin
— uncontrollable heartbeat — holds its breath — internal
breathing — to eyes the loss — already the inscription

if in the silence is bending down — is stripping — is coming
close — if it is holding close — a body — like sometimes —
surely

from the longing to say — from the flow of words — over-
flowing — seeking the way out of the body — is inventing
— intangible discourse

II

Towards another body speech unceasingly projected
naked — stripped by the words
naked — recovered — veiled — forbidden — protection
of the words

without coherence memory — body which offers itself once
more to the blows — without dressing the wounds — with-
out catching its breath

useless waiting for healing
awaiting a word-cure
the voices all equally held back
each at the edge of the pit — each in fear

with weapons ready to kill
hate and sweetness of the voices
slow preparation for the attack — by gestures — sketched
— barely — slipping of the skin — gaze of penetration

dull shocks of the first tangled words — to stoke the pain —
great fire — with all the words possible — unforeseen —
from words to cries — oscillating movements body's rocking
— to and fro — body stretched — looking in the shadow for
traces of words — to redo the apprenticeship — syllables
one by one unearthed — washed — polished — to reach the
bright sound — perceptible to other bodies

multitude of voices — sailing
retreat — recall — recovering the torn skin — body
following the same rhythm — open and shut

the body fills up — thousands of storming voices — masti-
cating each piece of still intact flesh — bringing to light
muffled fears — shames blushes — spark strong resistance
— tear out the taut lines — leave the bloody body there —
massacred by the words — violence always insatiable

shattered defenses — blades or lances — thrust in —
peeling back the edge of wounds — seeking the nerves
rummaging in the still living traces
stop sometimes
hopes of rest
and fresh start wound work

at each voice the startle
long shudder of overpopulated memory
words pulled out of chaos — out of clay — looming up of
the deposit of the unsaid — untenable pressure — explosion

pursuit of awful mobility — inlaid the voices the passages
— confused motions of being — agonies and ravings
to make word ceaselessly — for running dreams aground —
desires — shipwreck of play — great shipwreck of to say

old traces of having been — recognition — in the confusion
— without memory — scattered voices — imprecise —
flowing from breath — come torturing of summons — pain
— in chance hearing

the voices irreplaceable losses — distant jamming — absence of reference — dissolved — absence of faces — loss of bodies — disappeared gazes and mouths — buried in motionless images — uncertainty of rhythms — of sounds in the extent — displacement of voices in the intensity of the breath — moving ladder of speech — seeking the precision of a body — in the blur — limit of landing at the heart — weakening of the beats — faint survival of voice-print

backwards in the scattered sounds
backtracking down the links of breath
interrupted — uninterrupted — fumbling at the lips
at the ear

to reproduce the old lost voices
first words of prehistory — memory of the far-off —
looking at the volcano — the reddening sky — the flames
— the earth opening up
or enormous wave — cresting at the horizon — tidal wave
— mountain of water — arriving facing — the time to see
it coming — there where it could have been
and violence of the sky — storms
great fear — the same ones each day
the disappearance
tremors — little by little — the articulation — the
speaking

to hear from afar
it hears the far-off
the gaps in time — the voice currents
mutations of words in the voices weighed down by the out-
flowing
alluvial deposits
snagged on the impediments
quivering of wounds

on the verge of the spasm — the ghost of a voice
the head suddenly full — its head — murmuring — the
sound level — replaces the voice — scrapings — misfires —
hooks a wordshape — with the help of a gesture — evident
image — with the help — modulation of sound — set high
— nasal — in search of — slow approach — towards tonality
— loses the rhythm — jolts — portends the word — retreat
and fear — but no — slow and sweet arrival of the voice —
phrase to roll calmly into memory — bright and distinct
knowing of moments moving — drowned in the voice —
still the absence

to dream the phrase scattered in duration
dissolution
time's return
spiral of voices uncoiling — descent the length — wrings
at times a cry — hollows the being — prolongs life — by
shakes — arrests of meaning
fixity of dead moments — underlying — inscribed there —
forever — in the loss

what it learns in the descent — in the uncoiling — in the
distance — the words — to say — how — to say — if
possible — when assailed by desire

uncertainty of meaning

endless remove

impossible discourse

to wrench itself in order to say — without restraint — to
undo itself — to wreck itself — in the extraordinary ampu-
tation — tenacious — of the words

blockaded in its ground
imprisoned in its lines — inextricable knot — to be
broken ceaselessly — if it wants the other's access
knowing creases and bruises at the moment of voice — of
articulation

captive in the forms and colors
spaces always full at the approaches — lines of mingled
bodies — partitioned — linear interferences — in order to
distance it from the body there — taken — possessed its
own body — in the disconnected corners — in the blank
spaces — fathomless

marginal the agreements
of the body
marginal the strong beats
the doubled strength
double embraces
in the junctures — the hesitation — lost traces —
scrambled by the accumulation — the ruins
remains solidified in the words
when upon itself congeals
or else with effort

hurls itself — with effort — continuous wrenching of a
body — hurls itself — stumbling — stops — sets off again
— words hurled out in front — folds lips — the whole body
folds — falls — gets up — in the flashing phrase of desire
— keeps running towards the other voice — falls back down
— stays there — motionlessness in the rehearsing of a word
— to pronounce clearly — aloud — for all — at last outside
— kneeling — in the word — at last gives way

if gives way — knows it — limit — its own weight —
exigency

if unknots itself — the exploded projection — its shreds

image — reflection — unrecognizable — to hear after —
knocking hard — within itself — what it says — vibrating
in the air in front of it — come full circle — return of its
words to the eardrum

deconstructed
crumbled
remakes itself from the other body its form
of the voices — its song

modeled by the voices — in time — each mouth tensed to
take to swallow — lengthens its body — stretches out — for
possession — no — for swallowing

never to slake — voice desire — fog everywhere — in which
appears — as always arms held out in front — hewing with
the body the wind cuts the thickness — singles out a voice
— and surrounds — revolves around — progression towards
a body — speaking — there

in the quest — breaks up — thins out
glides ephemeral into speech
loss of its substance
is no more than this word — there — in front of it

incorporated into the other — taken in every hiccup of
breath — unbalanced by the wait for articulation still —
subject to the energy of the syllables — shaken by the flow

will not leave the stream
exchange without end
of its voice going and coming back laden — its islet of
memory — testing cohesion — to put together the lumps
to combine unlike soil
to leave their silt behind — work of insect — of river — to
reconstruct its bed

to choose its voices for that — the one of the body there —
stretched against it then — under it — or stuck to itself —
in the initial position — mouth against hip — crushed —
hands gliding along thighs — legs tangled — lying in wait
for a stirring at the heart — for necessary speech — to make
say — to provoke the word — by body movements — pain
sweetness

amalgam — refrain — all the cries — moans and voices —
scraps in the head
to leave undefined — not to seek the form — blurry assembly —
engaging of voices — one in the other — unified
expansion — homogeneous — of a cellular discourse —
foreign

choice of arrangement — bringing together of voices from
deep to shrill — tonal gradation — or oppositions — asso-
nances — all the cut-outs all the possible melodic construc-
tions — according to violence or appeasement
according to desire — to inclination — the association

caught up in it — pleasure of rehearsing — looks for the right note — goes back over the voice — corrects the intensity — orders the course — dams up — of these geological words knows only the power of making — acts similar — treats the voice as the liquid element — malleable — gliding in time the bed already traced out — windings in curves little by little closing — erasing the loops — digging out body valleys — as far as its memory goes — all the disappeared bodies — oblivion — underground

flowed into the body there — to rejoin the moment there —
no longer trying to flee — dived into the other body —
drawing out its sap — the quantity of words it needs to
survive — to get to the end of the day — perhaps possible
— if it is not frightened of the pain

body grip — word grip — asks the other body for the
unexpressed — birth of uncertainty — already overwhelmed
— will never be said — knows it — hopeless waiting to
touch being

according to the caress
according to the connection — the disorder
the furrow's hollow
is being inscribed on its body — the sketch of a voice —
flaming etching — depth in black — the mark — the tattoo
— inside the sign — the blank page of meaning

to blacken its body — the corrosion — to cover up the skin
— so there isn't a patch left to incise — a landscape of scars
— its wrinkles — its folds — its aging

no other way out of the body — the shrinking of surfaces —
pull back to the bone — folding back to the bone — along
with the words — to keep in the world like this maybe

by a body — to help — hangs on — with both hands
gripping flesh — arms and legs wrapping — and squeezes
at the core — tightly — tightly bound

or disconnected — in the withdrawing — the distance — its
tension — to help — towards the other body — desire —
waiting — hangs on

hope — has recourse
hoping to reach — flowing towards the other body —
motionless — or imperceptible shifting — encircled by waves
— generated by the meeting — its motions of desire in
space — gravitation

arms around shoulders — sides meeting — head leaning —
brings facing other body — bellies meeting — as if already
naked — accepted

dived into the body
disarms itself
unhooks its nerves — or shivers
invisible sequence of vibrating states
is no longer there to look
is no longer there to feel the cold
is no longer there

according to the heat
according to the tension
imagines the contact — of its body with the other
imagines
nothing like — beyond image — ceaselessly projected —
outside the real — erases distances — would already like to
be outside time

only knows the slowness — the uncertainty — of its imagined gestures — pale reproduction — gaps in the colors —
in the sounds — gaps of the body — unforeseeable responses

fear of loss — of denial
to the body
reduction to touch
always less than the possible
always braking
wounds to protect
from the violence of the blows — to collect itself to
endure
heartbeats — to diminish — to soften its gestures — to
sweeten the gaze — by a smile is calmed
by a smile is confused — diluted in the sweetness — the
panic of the irreversible gesture — of released speech —
suspended

to take back its words
to withdraw its gestures
at the least obstacle to change voices
to disappear from its own body — to go along with the
other rhythm — lost in the impulse the acceleration of the
other flow — looks endlessly for the balance of the not-pain
— of the bearable

it repeats the circuit to infinity — locates the impact points
— the obstructions — opens the paths — by hand — by
gaze — those it will take — or not — those it will let get
away — irretrievable — those it will plunge into with no
return

choice the paths of approach — attempts — trials — still
the frustration — faltering desire — applied to each body
— seeking the exhaustion — the stop to the chains of words
— the end of shivering

at the edge of the words
on the track
imprecise threshold of coherence
fake grip
border always in motion
coming and going of the shore
skidding of the madness silence

precarious struggle — when it isn't reverberating words
withdrawal

choice still the withdrawal — of absence — or of image —
of articulation

the signs of withdrawal — its flattened body — motionless
against the other body — eyes open or closed — hands
flattened — palms down — feet crossed one over the other
— and mouth — pursed mouth — no — without effort —
closed normally — pressure of upper on lower — pressure
of lower on upper — muscles relaxed — easing of the joints
— relaxed cartilage — easy breathing — without suffering
perhaps

how much time like this
it holds on
how much time resting
is going to start up again — knows it — at the edge already
the first words are waiting — speech being reborn — hitch
still looking for its post

from here the future — the future of time — duration —
the unbelievable duration of breath — ceaseless desire to
stop the breath — to choose stopping — the end — against
chance — against the waiting — against the fear — its will
to suffocate — but no — will never happen — blocks its
breath — its words — keeps silent — but no — does not
resign itself to the definitive — in the other body pursues —
tireless — tired out — despairing

still motion
from the violent to the imperceptible — the motionless —
the motionless never — semblance of fixity at best — invis-
ible rustling of the whole body
invisible — not to be seen
never seen from there where it sees
not seen — the quivering
without grip — smooth — without flow
not a tear — nor sweat — outbreak — nor shivers — the
cold
inanimate — no — somewhere pain's nerve — somewhere
breathing

III

Like dead the buried text
when driven silent — exhausted — alone in its space — tells
itself — improvises facts and gestures for itself — solitary
banishment — disperses — expanded its body expanding
— into future — would want to live of its own articulation
— the whole until the end — is hoping — hopes to be
enough until the end of imaginary speech

imaginary capture
to say to itself
to the eye its gaze
turns the glove of anguish inside out
destitution of the being

on the outskirts of calm
extinction of images
no longer fit together the scraps
off the track — chains of opaque

choice
no more choice

obstructed by darkness silence
reduced to inertia sleep
leaves last the dreams — farts
scattered words — images — funky smell of images — to
make with — subjected — increasing jamming — to live in
its nights — in the dark — to plunge in — the words of
madness

begins the writing
circuit of hatchings
description of the discontinuous
diagrams of cries — the contour lines — the traces of damp-
ness — of easing — it draws the remains of coherence —
patience — enduring patience of the recognition

in its ruins rummages — what it finds — dissolved
dust in the day — in the light
barely glimpsed disappeared the images
remains the monoliths
the great stones
marks of time
sudden condensations of the pain

silent monoliths — engraved on the surface — untranslatable signs — searches all around — the space — searches for its jumbled body — invents possible translations — conjugates obstructed the verb — being without subject

all the forms of the negative — or gaping — the abstract — images absent from time — accessible by reconstruction — to reproduce the duration by increments — around silence — in the meantime lost the traces of life

shifting grounds — the sands — there where it dived in —
disappeared from the ground

deep — in its earth its excavations — inverted underground
pyramid — at the heart — bounded — its birth perhaps —
or finish — its tree — its voice resounding — muffled —
against the walls — its things set down all around — its
possessions — necklaces of words — rings of syllables —
breastplate of breath — archeological metaphors the mem-
ory of the remains — writing inside out

hands open — like mouth — already seen — open
to speak
hands closed on words
to grasp with its body — units of flesh
its flesh
the nerves of the written

It then — becomes flesh
possible the voice — in the hush of the ripping — the
transcription
somewhere the metamorphoses of the bones

shattered — powdery — somewhere calcified — quicklime
— was built — whiteness of the words — their becoming —
bones

unless red the wounds
the ink — vital
the incision
with which to write — if any is left — just at the threshold
— before the exhaustion — to open itself up with words

unless resistant flesh
scarring over the words — it muffles the sound of the wounds
— bleaches its nerves naked — plays on the sweetness of
the words — hushed — fixed in the white — or taken from
the transparent matter — for conservation — forever harm-
less — intact — sheltered from time

its losses — there — then — its secretions
exposed — petrified
isolated from the flow
separated from the body — bit by bit used up — erosion
floating — empty all around — infinite

in the time of fixed writing
its flesh hardens — contracts the fibres — prepares its body
each day for its own mutilation

decides the words — decides the uprooting — how far to go
— in the pain — to stay in the bearable — or not — each
day to open itself on the skin nicks the lips
to plunge the suction needle a little deeper into the veins —
to tighten the tourniquet

empties its body of its words

suction

filters with lips — deposits — displays undefined shreds

coagulation — the sentence
at the torn edges punctuation — the stains — typographical
games — silence of motionless blood

which explodes with blood — spreads out — released to
itself — fills up again
extended circulation
the page — lengthens the body — organ of pulsation —
out of body
out of there — which regulates the rhythm
the writing of the body

out of there — the other head — which combines
breaks up
the flesh into words — the body into cries
compels the inarticulate
blocks there the breath

its expanded body — by addition
new flow — speech — the verbs

it declines its time — invariable
counts out — how — the adverbs — sounding
beyond measure its body
there where touching
at last the connection

the subject
which
a word
upon a word — which — gaze — white — gaze — inscribes
itself — the trace subject — somewhere — for some time —
the visible to itself if not whose — illegible trace — improb-
able — deciphered

forever its body subject
the undefined subject
the writing of the definition

grammatical fixity to liquidate molten — or like a deposit
sometimes — a form
contradiction — to glide the body into word — trading
form
from blood to drawing
never

loses itself — seen that one — itself — in fixed speech —
unrecognizable flat described — appeared out of skull — if
some containing perhaps — with vision

a container of identity

body skull the head — to keep to these solid limits against
the fluidity — the fear of not being its words

a place then — to dream up a place where identity happens

between the body and the writing
where — swollen space
trading time
tension's motion — when rupture — the oppositional forces
— shattered body — knows itself there discontinuous —
vision of extreme suffering from its own loss — disinte-
grated — non-existent to itself — dead the body at the
moment of the transmutation

dark birth somewhere
afloat — or resistant
according to the crystallizations
according to the state — to have it
pressure on it its discards — pulsations waves of anguish
— death fears
going projecting words the moment of its disappearance —
to struggle against the ultimate — moment of absence

all its inscriptions — neither rescue registers — nor
glimmer
continues the marks — its traces of existence — present
the living absolute — the writing there

so that to see it — knows itself there — in the word — does
not reach completion

no subsiding — descent — dizziness — nor cold's invasion
— as far as putting out the breath — what it feels this way
— its end

of its words then — has recourse
hopes not to reach
covering itself over with the saying
final — the term of its voice

or not — knows it — ridiculous inscribes it
in time's margin

the invisible outflow — to slow down — only that —
inhabits the wait — frames the space around itself
words as target perhaps
concentration of scattered story

It then — its breath — the story of words — the written
object — its rhythm — how it means to beat in speech — to
melt words to recognize there the edge of a body perhaps

what it recognizes — or reveals to itself
the wounds the cuts
nerves' road
resistances' tension — sounds' distortions its spaces' flights
— vision's gaps — its refusal to hear — safe places off the
track underlying the words

or only heard at the ear the sound of the rips — its opened
flesh — the daily dismemberment — skinned alive — that
one — seen again under its cries

or seen by the eye the shaped words — put aside — for a
time of outflow — to come — to try not to see its trapped
body — there — in its words

or else — opposite — finally accepts the future form —
already inscribed inside the words — sees itself written —
in the end — last word

last sign writes light

last of the written — walled up — tomb — if tried the
inscription on the door — whereas behind the body of dust
— the imaginary written absolute — a noun name

a noun name subject

absent the body

no identity of any kind anywhere in the dust

subject the noun name — to the body
the verticality of the visible
surrounded by vision infinitely
transmitted

while identifiable
thrown back on the words
the bed of time
lying there — horizontal space undone

to body — knows itself lost — at variance
to erosion — permanent death
drawing aside the words — taken the place — inhabited by
verbal space — always further — into the pain — its trans-
parence

silence — a mute landscape
mute body
traded for articulation
the utterance

its flesh at last inlaid in speech
its flesh — in the flesh of the visible

It then — migrated
transcribed

“to make it really visible — in its infinitely numerous images — uneasily” The project of Collobert’s inward gaze is to bear witness. She enunciates the words for desire and for loss — the other words — with harrowing intensity. *It Then* explores the limits of the phenomenal body and of speech by the agency of a prose which defies category.

Michael Palmer

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